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Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Club

H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES  
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017.

Appropriations Committee  
February 16, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and committee members thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs to discuss the proposed elimination of the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant. The elimination of this grant will result in staff cuts, program elimination and the reduction of children served at our clubs. The economic impact of this cut will be most severe for our inner city clubs.

The Alliance consists of seventeen organizations serving 57,000 young people in twenty three towns and cities. Boys and Girls Clubs provide a safe haven that has programs that supplement the school day by providing afterschool educational and recreational opportunities.

Clubs in Connecticut receive funding through the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant and use that funding to implement four programs designed to improve academic success, develop healthy lifestyles and build good character and citizenship in our members. These programs and others like them enable our clubs to extend and reinforce what is being taught in school.

The Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs is a strong partner in the effort to close the achievement gap for so many young people who attend our clubs. Clubs have a very real impact on a young persons life during the critical out of school time. The state of Connecticut has been a great partner in the collective effort to bring opportunities to those children who are challenged by the achievement gap. The budget Governor Malloy has presented puts the breaks on these efforts by eliminating all funding from the Neighborhood Youth Center Grant.

The Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs is dedicated to measuring the impact of the club experience.

- Research in the Education field has shown for some time that students with frequent absences and behavioral incidents have lower levels of academic achievement and are more likely to drop out of school. <sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Children in Poverty. (2008, Sept.). Present, engaged & accounted for: The critical importance of addressing chronic absence in the early grades. New York, NY: Chang, H. & Romero, M. 7b

- Studies suggest that quality after school programming can influence those risk factors, especially school attendance <sup>6 7 8</sup>.
- Thanks to a new partnership between the Charter Oak Group, the Connecticut Department of Education, and the Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, we are now able to see the influence Boys & Girls Clubs have on these risk factors for the members we serve and compare them to their peers across the state.
- In Connecticut, in the 2013-14 school year, almost 11% of the students in grades K-12 statewide were chronically absent (they missed more than 10% of school days).
- In a study of more than 6,600 Boys and Girls Club members in Connecticut, we found that our members were 60% less likely to be chronically absent when compared to students across the state.

The Alliance is a statewide entity with the ability to adapt our collective services to the needs of the state and is the optimum partner to provide these critical out of school time services. Please consider restoring the Neighborhood Youth Center funding and let's continue in this work together providing "Great Futures" for the children who need us most in Connecticut.

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<sup>2</sup> Epstein, J. L. & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *Journal of Educational Research*, 95(5), 308-318. 8

<sup>3</sup> Gottfried, M.A. (2010, June). Evaluating the relationship between student attendance and achievement in urban elementary and middle schools: An instrumental variables approach. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(2), 434-465.

<sup>4</sup> Balfanz, Herzog and Mac Iver, 2007, citing Alexander, K. L.; Entwisle, D. R. and Kabbani, N. S. (2001). "The Dropout Process in Life Course Perspective: Early Risk Factors at Home and School," *Teachers College Record*, 103, 760-822.

<sup>5</sup> Balfanz, R. *Putting Middle Grades Students on the Graduation Path: A Policy and Practice Brief* (Westerville, Ohio: National Middle School Association (now known as Association for Middle Level Education), June 2009), <http://www.amle.org/Research/ResearchfromtheField/tabid/1642/Default.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> Kauh, Tina J., *AfterZone: Outcomes for Youth Participating in Providence's After-School System*, Public/Private Ventures, August 2011

<sup>7</sup> Arbretton, Amy et al, *Making Every Day Count: Boys & Girls Clubs' Role in Promoting Positive Outcomes for Teens*, May 2009

<sup>8</sup> Vile, J.D., Arcaira, E. & Reisner, E.R. *Progress toward high school graduation: Citizen Schools' youth outcomes in Boston*. Washington, D.C.: Policy Studies Associates, Inc., 2009

